

THE JOURNALS
OF
William
CAPT. THOMAS BECKNELL

—FROM—

Boone's Lick to Santa Fe

—AND FROM—

Santa Cruz to Green River

REPRINTED FROM THE
MISSOURI INTELLIGENCER WITH NOTES

—BY—

F. A. SAMPSON

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THE JOURNALS OF CAPT. THOMAS BECKNELL FROM
BOONE'S LICK TO SANTA FE, AND FROM SANTA
CRUZ TO GREEN RIVER.

The expeditions of Capt. Becknell from the old town of Franklin to Santa Fe were important because they directed the attention of the people to the possibilities of the new and unexplored source of trade to be opened up to Missourians, and extended the lines of trade and adventure centering largely in St. Louis, which city had a greater scope of country tributary to it than any other point in the United States ever had as a trade center.

By the first expedition made by Becknell he became the founder of the Santa Fe trade, and the father of the Santa Fe trail;(1) he led the first successful trading expedition to that place, taking with him the first wagon that ever passed over the route. The records of his expeditions and of other parties soon after, are found in the Missouri Intelligencer, the first newspaper published in Missouri outside of St. Louis; and because of the rarity of this paper, the State Historical Society of Missouri, having probably the only file of it in existence, the various notices found in it are given fully.

(1) The American Fur Trade of the Far West by *W*. M. Chittenden. Vol. II, p. 501.

The outfitting of these expeditions remained at Franklin, where the *Missouri Intelligencer* was published, until 1830, when the headquarters for this were transferred to Independence, and the history of the early expeditions from that place is not as well preserved as those that went from Franklin.

Capt. Becknell seems to have had financial troubles, as various publications of a suit for debt by attachment are found in the *Intelligencer* between January 15, 1822, and May 7, of the same year, in a suit by Henry V. Bingham, administrator brought in the Howard Circuit Court at the November term, 1821, and renewed at the January term, 1822, for the sum of \$495.75. As his second expedition was at a later date the matter was no doubt satisfactorily arranged.

Shortly after the starting of the second expedition the following appeared in the *Intelligencer*:

“About three months since a number of persons, principally of this county, forming two parties, one under the direction of Col. Cooper, and the other of Capt. Becknell, left here for Santa Fe, upon a trading expedition. The former party preceded that of the latter several days, and we regret to learn, by the following extract of a letter from a gentleman of respectability, at Fort Osage, to his friend in this place, that it has met with a serious disaster.

“Fort Osage, Aug. 20.

“It is reported that Col. Cooper’s party were robbed by the Indians, and left in a starving condition. The news came here by Gen. Atkinson from the Council Bluffs. Mr. Immell, of the Missouri Fur Company, who had been out with the party, brought the information to the Bluffs. The party of Col. Cooper had sent to Mr. Immell for relief, who was not in a situation to afford them any—and they must either have arrived at Santa Fe before this or perished. The presumption is, that if they were not deprived of their guns and ammunition they could be able to live; consequently their being left,

as the report says, in a starving condition, implies that they were robbed of the means of procuring the necessary food.

"I am inclined (exclusive of the reports coming from so correct a source) to believe that it is true, as Mr. Glenn, who came in from Santa Fe some weeks ago, stated that he met Col. Cooper's party at the Big Bend of the Arkansas, and he had no doubt but they would fall in with several war parties of Indians in a few days, who would rob and probably kill them, as he had been stopped by the same Indians, and with difficulty got clear of them, and had he not have had an interpreter, would doubtless have shared a similar fate—Cooper being without an interpreter, will render his traveling through the country extremely dangerous.

"I mention this in order that you may let their friends know the source from which the news came, and will vouch that what I have stated is correct (as it was told me by Gen. Atkinson) in every essential particular." (2)

"A company of about fifty persons, principally from St. Louis and its vicinity are now in town, on their way to Santa Fe. Their purpose is to hunt and obtain furs. We wish them greater success than has befallen to the lot of those mentioned above." (2)

"Santa Fe of New Mexico.

"It is becoming a familiar operation for our citizens to visit this capital. Mr. Glenn, of Cincinnati, who had a trading house on the Arkansas, has just returned; also Mr. Jas. M'Night, who had been a prisoner for a good part of ten years, and his brother, Mr. John M'Night, who went in search of him upwards of a year ago. Col. Cooper, the courageous settler of the Boone's Lick country, has also gone out with a numerous company, and others in this town contemplate an early departure. From all that we can learn from these travelers, the people of Santa Fe and of the internal provinces,

(2) Missouri Intelligencer, Sept. 3, 1822.

are exceedingly ignorant, destitute of commerce, and of all spirit of enterprise. We have heard much of the aridity of these countries, and learn additional facts upon that head as curious as astonishing. Mr. Glenn says there had been no rain at Santa Fe for about three years, and no complaint about it, the people irrigating their fields by ditches and canals, from the river del Norte and from the streams which issue from the highlands and neighboring mountains." (3)

The party under Col. Cooper was the first to return, as stated in the following notice:

"The arrival of the greater part of the company under the superintendence of Col. Cooper from Santa Fe, happily contradicts the report afloat a few weeks since, of their having been 'robbed and left in a starving condition.' The company met with some trifling losses on their return, but we understand, from a respectable gentleman of the company, with whom we have conversed, that nothing serious occurred to interrupt their progress during their absence.

"Many have also returned who composed the party under the direction of Capt. Becknell. Those of both these parties who remained at Santa Fe (among whom is Capt. Becknell), may be expected in a few weeks." (4)

In a speech by Mr. Floyd in the U. S. House of Representatives on the Bill for the occupation of the Columbia river he referred to the Becknell expedition, and the same paper has this editorial:

"We are well pleased with the remarks made by this gentleman, and confidently hope that the subject of them will be considered in the important light to which it is so justly entitled. There is, however, a trifling inaccuracy in that part of the speech in which it is stated that a waggon returned from Santa Fe last summer, "bringing with it \$10,000," etc.

(3) Missouri Intelligencer, Sept. 17, 1822, quoted from St. Louis Enquirer.

(4) Missouri Intelligencer, Oct. 8, 1822.

Although we do not doubt that \$10,000, or even a much larger sum, was brought into this State during last summer, from Santa Fe, yet the amount was conveyed upon pack-horses, etc., and not in a waggon. But **one** waggon has ever **gone** from this State to Santa Fe, and that was taken by Capt. Wm. Becknell (from the vicinity of this place, and not from St. Louis, as stated by Mr. Floyd), in the early part of last spring, and sold there for seven hundred dollars, which cost here \$150. This information we obtained from Capt. B. personally, who at the same time mentioned his intention of starting again for Santa Fe next fall, with **three** waggons for the same purpose.

"We are promised by Capt. B. that in a few weeks he will furnish us with such information relative to Santa Fe as will be useful and entertaining to our readers." (6)

"A paragraph is going the rounds of the public prints, stating that a son of Col. Cooper, who lately returned from Santa Fe, was killed by the Bhamanche Indians. This is not correct. A nephew of Col. Cooper joined the Spaniards in an expedition against these Indians, and was killed in an engagement which terminated in favor of the Spaniards." (6)

During the summer of 1823 another expedition left Franklin for Santa Fe, as narrated in the following:

"A company, consisting of about thirty individuals, left this county during the last week, on a commercial adventure to Santa Fe. They will proceed to Fort Osage, from whence they will take a direct course to the place of their destination. Each of them is provided with one or two pack-horses, and takes, on an average, about two hundred dollars worth of goods. We are gratified to learn that they have selected Col. Cooper, one of our most respectable citizens (who visited that place last summer), to command them. His knowledge of the route, and his experience in Indian warfare, admirably qualify

(6) Missouri Intelligencer, Feb. 13, 1823.

him for the task, and render him a very valuable acquisition to the company. The whole party is well armed, and will no doubt be able to resist successfully an attack from any of the wandering tribes of savages which it may encounter on the way. We wish the greatest success to so worthy a spirit of liberal enterprise." (7)

The misfortunes of the party are stated:

"We regret to have to state, that the company, whose departure for Santa Fe we mentioned about four weeks since, have sustained the loss of nearly all their horses. Some Osage Indians conjectured to be about twenty, followed them eighty miles undiscovered, with a view, as appears in the sequel, of committing outrage. On the morning of the first instant, at about dawn, while all the company were asleep except two, who, not apprehending danger, had retired from an advanced position to the campfires, they were alarmed by the discharge of guns, and the yells of the savages. Although the guns were discharged towards the encampment, it is not the belief of those from whom we had our information that they designed personal injury. Their object was to frighten away the horses, in which they completely succeeded. Being on horseback they took advantage of the alarm and momentary confusion occasioned by such an unexpected attack, and evident appearance of assault, to drive off the horses unmolested, whose speed was increased by shouting and other exertions. Four men pursued them about ten miles, when their horses failing they were obliged to desist.

"The Indians killed several horses during the chase because they would not keep up. This misfortune, by which they lost forty-five horses, being all but eight, took place over three hundred miles from this place, on the waters of the Arkansas. Various circumstances combine to fix this outrage on the Osages, who receive regular annuities from Govern-

(7) Missouri Intelligencer, May 13, 1823.

ment, and have a school among them through its beneficence and the charity of individuals. They have before been guilty of similar offences, and have long been distinguished for their predatory habits, and are daily becoming bolder; and unless checked by prompt measures we fear they will cause a great interruption to western intercourse. Six men who returned for a new supply of horses are already on their way back, so the enterprise, although subject to vexatious delay and disappointment, will not be defeated by it." (8)

JOURNAL OF TWO EXPEDITIONS FROM BOONE'S LICK TO SANTA FE, BY CAPT. THOMAS BECKNELL.

"Our company crossed the Missouri near the Arrow Rock ferry on the first day of September, 1821, and encamped six miles from the ferry. The next morning being warm and cloudless, we proceeded on our journey over a beautiful rolling prairie country, and traveled 35 miles, crossing the Petit Osage Plain,(9) which is justly accounted one of the most romantic and beautiful places in the State. The traveler approaches the plain over a very high point of adjoining prairie; suddenly the eye catches a distant view of the Missouri on the right, and a growth of lofty timber adjoining it about two miles wide. In front is a perfectly level, rich and beautiful plain of great extent, and diversified by small groves of distant timber, over which is a picturesque view of nearly twenty miles. On the left it is bounded by a branch of the La Mine river,(10) which is handsomely skirted with timber; while still further in this

(8) Missouri Intelligencer, June 17, 1823.

(9) The "Petit Osage" also called "Petit O'Sage" plains are in Saline County, on the north side of Salt Fork, now covered with cultivated farms, and held at about \$150 per acre.

(10) This branch was Salt Fork, which does not empty directly into the La Mine, but into Blackwater river, a branch of the La Mine. It flows almost due east from its source in Lafayette County. The Santa Fe trail here was what had been the "Osage trace," being north of Salt Fork. Marshall, the County seat of Saline County, is south of Salt Fork.

direction the view is bounded by the fanciful undulations of high prairie. Description cannot do justice to such a varied prospect, or the feelings which are excited in beholding it. This being about the time of equinoctial storms, we suffered some inconvenience for two or three days on account of rains and a cool and humid atmosphere. Arrived at Fort Osage, (11) we wrote letters, purchased some medicines, and arranged such affairs as we thought necessary previous to leaving the confines of civilization. The country, for several days' travel from Fort Osage, is very handsomely situated, being high prairie, of exceeding fertility; but timber, unfortunately, is scarce. On the fourth day after leaving the Fort, I was taken sick in consequence of heat and fatigue induced by chasing two elks which we had wounded the day before, but which had strength sufficient to elude our pursuit. Some other of the company complained of illness about this time; but determining not to surrender to trifles, or indulge in delay, until it became absolutely necessary, we continued to travel slowly.

"On the 20th we crossed the main Osage, (12) being nearly all sick and much discouraged. It rained severely, and we were under the necessity of stopping to dry our baggage. On the second day after crossing the Osage, we saw many buffaloe, one of which we killed; we also saw several goats (13), but they were so sharp sighted and wild we could not shoot them. This day we encamped on the waters of the Arkansas, after travelling over much uneven prairie,

(11) Fort Osage was the first fort west of Bellefontaine. It was located and built by Gen. Clark and George Sibley, and the town of Sibley in Lafayette County, is on the site of it.

(12) The Santa Fe trail crosses the headwaters of the Osage at what is now Burlingame in Osage County, Kansas. The headwaters of the Neosho, which flows to the Arkansas, and those flowing to the Osage are not far apart, and are separated by a ridge, and on the second day from the present town of Burlingame he was on the Arkansas watershed.

(13) These were evidently antelope. Judge W. B. Napton of Marshall tells me that when he passed over the trail in 1857 he first saw buffalo on Turkey creek in what is now Marion County, Kansas, not far from the locality given by Capt. Becknell.

almost entirely covered with flint rock. About this time we encountered two days of incessant rain. We halted in a small grove to refresh ourselves, rest our horses and wash our clothes. We sent out two hunters who killed a deer, and saw some goats and a large herd of buffaloe. Late in the evening of Monday the 24th, we reached the Arkansas, having traveled during the day in sight of buffaloe, which are here innumerable. The Arkansas at this place is about three hundred yards wide, very shallow, interrupted by bars, and confined by banks of white sand—the water has every appearance of being as muddy as that of the Missouri; we, however, crossed one of its branches whose waters were limpid and beautiful, and which was one hundred yards wide a mile from its mouth. We gave this the name of Hope Creek. These streams afford no timber except a few scattered cottonwoods. It is a circumstance of surprise to us that we have seen no Indians, or fresh signs of them, although we have traversed their most frequented hunting grounds; but considering their furtive habits, and predatory disposition, the absence of their company during our journey, will not be a matter of regret. The next day we crossed the Arkansas at a place where it is not more than eighteen inches deep, and encamped on the south bank. We left our encampment early the next morning, and about noon came to a large settlement or town of prairie dogs, which appeared to cover a surface of ten acres. They burrow in the earth, are of a dark brown color, about the size of a pup five or six weeks old, which they nearly resemble in every respect except the ears, which are more like those of the possum. Having a desire to taste its flesh, I killed one, a small part of which I roasted, but found it strong and unpalatable. Their sense of hearing is acute, and their apprehension of danger so great that the least noise of approach frightens them to their holes, from which they make continual and vehement barking until a person approaches within fifty or sixty yards of them; they then take to their holes with their heads elevated above the ground and

continue barking until the approach is very near, when they disappear instantaneously. They often sit erect, with their fore legs hanging down like a bear. We found here a ludicrous looking animal, perfectly unknown to any one of our company; it was about the size of a racoon, of a light grey color, had uncommonly fine fur, small eyes, and was almost covered with long shaggy hair; its toe nails were from one and a half to two inches in length; its meat was tender and delicious. We also killed one of the rabbit species as large as a common fox; it was of a grey color, but its ears and tail were black. It exhibited an agility in running a short distance after it was shot which exceeded anything of the kind we had ever witnessed. We regret the deficiency of our zoological information, which prevents our giving a more scientific and satisfactory account of these animals.

“The evening of the 28th brought us to some very high hills for this country, composed entirely of sand, which had been in sight all day, exhibiting at a distance a luminous or whitish appearance; they are very extensive, and entirely destitute of vegetation. We encamped here, substituting buffaloe manure for fuel. Our lodging was very uncomfortable, in consequence of being exposed to torrents of rain, which poured upon us incessantly till day. The next morning we started early, and killing a buffaloe for breakfast, proceeded again on our journey. At about one o'clock found ourselves on the celebrated salt plain of the Arkansas. It was about one mile wide; its length we did not ascertain. Its appearance was very different from the idea I had formed from the several descriptions I had seen. This, however, might have been owing to the late heavy rains, that had covered the earth three inches deep with water, which we found to be a strong brine. Under the water was an apparent mixture of salt and sand; and in dry weather I have no doubt the appearance of salt would be much greater. So far as the eye can reach, on every side, the country here appears alive with buffaloe and other animals.

About this time we saw five wild horses, being the first we had seen. They had the appearance, at a distance, of being fine large animals. Some difficulties now presented themselves, especially the scarcity of food for our horses, and timber for fire.

"A continual and almost uninterrupted scene of prairie meets the view as we advance, bringing to mind the lines of Goldsmith,

"Or onward where Campania's plain, forsaken, lies

A weary waste extending to the skies."

The immense number of animals, however, which roam undisturbed, and feed bountifully upon its fertility, gives some interest and variety to the scenery. The wolves sometimes attack the buffaloe; and whenever an attack is contemplated, a company of from ten to twenty divide into two parties, one of which separates a buffaloe from his herd, and pursues him, while the others head him. I counted twenty-one wolves one morning in a chase of this kind.

"We still continue meandering the Arkansas, but travel very slowly in consequence of the still continued ill health of some of the party. Our horses here for the first time attempted to leave the encampment; and one strayed off which we never saw afterwards.

"The water of the river is here clear, although the current is much more rapid than where we first struck it. Its bed has gradually become narrower, and its channel consequently deeper. The grass in the low lands is still verdant, but in the high prairie it is so short that a rattlesnake, of which there are vast numbers here, may be seen at the distance of fifty yards; they inhabit holes in the ground.

"On the 15th, we discovered a lake, which had every appearance of being strongly impregnated with saltpetre. Our horses having become very weak from fatigue and the unfitness of their food, we encamped three days to recruit them and dress some skins for moccasins; during which time we killed three goats and some other game.

"On the 21st we arrived at the forks of the river, and took the course of the left hand one. The cliffs became immensely high, and the aspect of the country is rugged, wild and dreary. On the evening of the 23d, we heard the report of a gun, which is the first indication of our being in the neighborhood of Indians.

"As yet we have encountered no difficulty for water, but have been destitute of bread or even salt for several weeks.

"On the 26th we saw large flocks of mountain sheep, one of which I killed. It had long thick hair, its color was of a dirty blue, with a very fine fur next the skin; a black streak extended from its head to its tail, which is short, and of a lighter color than its body; its rump and hams were very similar to those of our domestic sheep.

"We had now some cliffs to ascend, which presented difficulties almost unsurmountable, and we were laboriously engaged nearly two days in rolling away large rocks, before we attempted to get our horses up, and even then one fell and was bruised to death. At length we had the gratification of finding ourselves on the open plain; and two days' travel brought us to the Canadian fork, whose rugged cliffs again threatened to interrupt our passage, which we finally effected with considerable difficulty.

"Nov. 1st, we experienced a keen northwest wind, accompanied with some snow. Having been now traveling about fifty days, our diet being altogether different from what we had been accustomed to; and unexpected hardships and obstacles occurring almost daily, our company is much discouraged; but the prospect of a near termination of our journey excites hope and redoubled exertion, although our horses are so reduced that we only travel from eight to fifteen miles per day. We found game scarce near the mountains, and one night encamped without wood or water. On the 4th, and several subsequent days, found the country more level and pleasant—discovered abundance of iron ore, and saw many wild horses. After several days' descent towards Rock

river, on Monday the 12th we struck a trail, and found several other indications which induced us to believe that the inhabitants had here herded their cattle and sheep. Timber, consisting of pine and cottonwood, is more plentiful than we have found it for some time.

“On Tuesday morning the 13th, we had the satisfaction of meeting with a party of Spanish troops. Although the difference of our language would not admit of conversation, yet the circumstances attending their reception of us, fully convinced us of their hospitable disposition and friendly feelings. Being likewise in a strange country, and subject to their disposition, our wishes lent their aid to increase our confidence in their manifestations of kindness. The discipline of the officers was strict, and the subjection of the men appeared almost servile. We encamped with them that night, and the next day about 1 o'clock, arrived at the village of St. Michael, the conduct of whose inhabitants gave us grateful evidence of civility and welcome. Fortunately I here met with a Frenchman, whose language I imperfectly understood, and hired him to proceed with us to Santa Fe, in the capacity of an interpreter. We left here early in the morning. During the day passed another village named St. Baw, and the remains of an ancient fortification, supposed to have been constructed by the aboriginal Mexican Indians. The next day, after crossing a mountain country, we arrived at SANTA FE and were received with apparent pleasure and joy. It is situated in a valley of the mountains, on a branch of the Rio del Norte or North river, and some twenty miles from it. It is the seat of government of the province; is about two miles long and one mile wide, and compactly settled. The day after my arrival I accepted an invitation to visit the Governor, whom I found to be well informed and gentlemanly in manners; his demeanor was courteous and friendly. He asked many questions concerning my country, its people, their manner of living, etc.; expressed a desire that the Americans would keep up an intercourse with that country, and said

that if any of them wished to emigrate, it would give him pleasure to afford them every facility. The people are generally swarthy, and live in a state of extreme indolence and ignorance. Their mechanical improvements are very limited, and they appear to know little of the benefit of industry, or the advantage of the arts. Corn, rice and wheat are their principal productions; they have very few garden vegetables, except the onion, which grows large and abundantly; the seeds are planted nearly a foot apart, and produce onions from four to six inches in diameter. Their atmosphere is remarkably dry, and rain is uncommon, except in the months of July and August. To remedy this inconvenience, they substitute, with tolerable advantage, the numerous streams which descend from the mountains, by daming them up, and conveying the water over their farms in ditches. Their domestic animals consist chiefly of sheep, goats, mules and asses. None but the wealthy have horses and hogs. Like the French, they live in villages; the rich keeping the poor in dependence and subjection. Laborers are hired for about three dollars per month; their general employment is that of herdsmen, and to guard their flocks from a nation of Indians called Navohoes, who sometimes murder the guards and drive away their mules and sheep. The circumstance of their farms being wholly unfenced, obliges them to keep their stock some distance from home. The walls of their houses are two or three feet thick, built of sun-dried brick, and are uniformly one story high, having a flat roof made of clay, and the floors are made of the same material. They do not know the use of plank and have neither chairs nor tables although the rich have rough imitation of our settee, which answers the treble purpose of chair, table and bedstead.

“My company concluded to remain at St. Michael, except Mr. M’Laughlin, and we left that village December 13, on our return home, in company with two other men who had arrived there a few days before, by a different route. At the time we started the snow was eighteen inches deep, but

the quantity diminished as we reached the high lands, which we thought an extraordinary circumstance. On the 17th day of our journey we arrived at the Arkansas, and thence shaped our course over the high land which separates the waters of that and the Caw rivers. Among the Caw Indians we were treated hospitably, purchased corn from them, and in forty-eight days from the time of our departure reached home, much to our satisfaction. We did not experience half the hardships anticipated, on our return. We had provisions in plenty, but Boreas was sometimes rude, whose unwelcome visits we could not avoid, and whose disagreeable effects our situation often precluded us from guarding against. We had, however, but one storm of snow or rain on our return, but were sometimes three or four days without a stick of timber. In such exigencies we again had recourse to buffaloe manure, which is a good substitute for fuel, and emits great heat.

“Having made arrangements to return, on the 22nd of May, 1822, I crossed the Arrow Rock ferry, and on the third day our company, consisting of 21 men, with three wagons, concentrated. No obstacle obstructed our progress until we arrived at the Arkansas, which river we crossed with some difficulty, and encamped on the south side. About midnight our horses were frightened by buffaloe, and all strayed—20 were missing. Eight of us, after appointing a place of rendezvous, went in pursuit of them in different directions, and found eighteen. Two of the company discovered some Indians, and being suspicious of their intentions, thought to avoid them by returning to camp; but they were overtaken, stripped, barbarously whipped, and robbed of their horses, guns and clothes. They came in about midnight, and the circumstance occasioned considerable alarm. We had a strong desire to punish the rascally Osages, who commit outrages on those very citizens from whom they receive regular annuities. One other man was taken by the same party to their camp, and probably would have shared like treatment, had not the presence of Mr. Choteau restrained their savage

dispositions. He sent word to me that he had recovered the horses and guns which had been taken from our men, and requested me to come on the next morning and receive them. On our arrival at his camp we found it evacuated, but a short note written on bark instructed me to follow him up the Autawge river. This we declined, thinking that his precipitate retreat indicated some stratagem or treachery. These Indians should be more cautiously avoided and strictly guarded against than any others on the route.

“Mr. Heath’s company on the some route joined us here. The hilarity and sociability of this gentleman often contributed to disperse the gloomy images which very naturally presented themselves on a journey of such adventure and uncertainty. After six days of incessant fatigue in endeavoring to recover all our horses, we once more left our camp, and after traveling eight days up the Arkansas, struck a southwest course for the Spanish country. Our greatest difficulty was in the vicinity of Rock river, where we were under the necessity of taking our waggons up some high and rocky cliffs by hand.

“We arrived again at St. Michael in 22 days from the Arkansas. We saluted the inhabitants with 3 rounds from our rifles, with which they appeared much pleased. With pleasure I here state, that the utmost harmony existed among our company on the whole route, and acknowledge the cheerfulness with which assistance was always rendered to each other. We separated at St. Michael for the purpose of trading more advantageously. Some of the company, among whom was Mr. Heath, remained there, and others I did not see again until my return. On our return we took a different course from that pursued on our way out, which considerably shortened the route, and arrived at Fort Osage in 48 days.

“Those who visit the country for the purpose of vending merchandise will do well to take goods of excellent quality and unfaded colors. An idea prevails among the people there, which is certainly a very just one, that the goods hitherto

imported into their country, were the remains of old stock, and sometimes damaged. A very great advance is obtained on goods, and the trade is very profitable; money and mules are plentiful, and they do not hesitate to pay the price demanded for an article if it suits their purpose, or their fancy. The administration of their government, although its form is changed, is still very arbitrary, and the influence which monarchy had on the minds and manners of the people still remains, which is displayed by the servility of the lower orders to the wealthy.

"An excellent road may be made from Fort Osage to Santa Fe. Few places would require much labor to make them passable; and a road might be laid out as not to run more than thirty miles over the mountains." (14)

"WILLIAM BECKNELL."

JOURNAL OF EXPEDITION FROM SANTA CRUZ TO THE GREEN RIVER BY CAPT. THOMAS BECKNELL.

On the 5th of November last, I left Santa Cruz, with a party of nine men, employed in my service, with a view of trapping on the Green river, several hundred miles from Santa Fe.

In the course of my route towards the point of destination, I passed through the gap in a mountain, which was so narrow as to greatly resemble a gate-way. This mountain, which had the appearance of an artificial mound, was about three or four hundred feet high, and not more than ten feet in breadth at the base. The country here is poor, and only timbered with pine and cedar. I met, in this vicinity, several parties of Indians, who were poor and inoffensive. It was, however, reported that some of the Indians who spent some time with us afterwards committed murders upon the persons of some of the *engages* of Mr. Provost of St. Louis, and robbed the remainder. We suffered every misery incident to such an enterprise in the winter season, such as hunger and cold—

but were exempted from robbery. The flesh of a very lean horse, which we were constrained to break our fast with, was, at this time, pronounced excellent. But when his bones were afterwards served up, as a matter of necessity, they were not as well relished, but had nearly proved fatal to the whole party. We found to our cost, that our stomachs, although tolerably commodiously disposed, were not equal to the task of digesting bones. You can readily imagine, that we were in that deplorable condition where it would be justifiable to adopt the philosophy of the ancient Romans, and give odds to die. But such is not the practice of Missourians. Although we were forty days from settlements, the snow three or four feet deep, and our small stock of horses, our principal reliance for effecting a retreat, considered sacred, so that to have eaten them would have been like dining upon our own feet, we still contrived to supply our tables, if not with the dainties of life, with food of the most substantial kind. For instance, we subsisted two days on soup made of a raw hide reserved for soaling our moccasins; on the following morning the remains were dished up into a hash. The young men employed by me had seen better days, and had never before been supperless to bed, nor missed a wholesome and substantial meal at the regular family hour, except one, who was with me when I opened the road to Santa Fe. When afterwards we were enabled to procure indifferent bear meat, we devoured it in that style of eagerness, which, on a review of our operations at this time, very forcibly reminds us of the table urbanity of a prairie wolf.

While at our winter camp we hunted when we could, and the remainder of the time attempted to sleep, so as to dream of the abundance of our own tables at home, and the dark rich tenants of our smoke-houses.

In the vicinity of our encampment, I discovered old diggings, and the remains of furnaces. There are also in the neighborhood the remains of many small stone houses, some of which have one story beneath the surface of the earth.

There is likewise an abundance of broken pottery here, well baked and neatly painted. This was probably the site of a town where the ancient Mexican Indians resided, as the Spaniards, who seldom visit this part of the country, can give no account of it.

On our way back to the settlement, we halted at the encampment of a band of Indians, who shocked our feelings not a little by the disposition they were about to make of an infirm (and no longer useful) squaw. When the principal part of the band had left their camp, two of the remaining proceeded to lay the sick woman upon her face, by the side of some of her effects. They then covered her with a funeral pile of pine wood, to which they set fire, and thus made a Hindoo sacrifice of the patient old matron.

As the depth of the snow, and the intense cold of the season rendered trapping almost impracticable, we succeeded, on a third attempt, in making good our retreat from this inhospitable wilderness, and reached a Spanish village on the fifth of April, after an absence of five months.

It was reported in the Spanish settlements, by a man who had been employed by George Armstrong, of Franklin, who accompanied me to Santa Fe, that he had been murdered by the Indians; but I have good reason to believe, and I most sincerely hope, this may be only an idle fabrication.

The trade to this province has been greatly injured by the reduction of prices—white domestics are only fifty cents per yard. An export duty of three per cent. is collected on all specie brought out of the province in this direction. Although my essays have been unfortunate speculations, I am disposed to make another experiment.

I traveled from the Spanish village of Taos, to Fort Osage, on the Missouri, in thirty-four days. I had supplied myself with provisions for the journey, consisting of meat, beans and peas. By the route which I traveled on my return, I avoided the so much dreaded sand hills, where adventurers have frequently been forced to drink the blood of their mules to

allay their thirst. Mr. Bailey Hardeman, of this county, was to have set out on his return, accompanied by a large party, on the first of the present month.

I cannot better conclude than by annexing this remark, that the toils endured, and the privations suffered in these enterprises, very naturally give a tone and relish to the repose and plenty found at the civilized fire side. (15)

WM BECKNELL.

(15) Missouri Intelligencer, June 25, 1825.



